

Take Up the Shield of Faith

1. What is faith?
 - a. dependence, reliance, trust
 - i. the “shield” here was a large, oblong, four-cornered shield made of two pieces of wood about 4’ tall glued together, covered with linen, then wrapped in leather and bonded with iron.
 1. This was not the small round shield, but a large shield that one could crouch down behind and hide from a volley of arrows
 2. *Thureos*, from the Greek word *thura*, “door”
 - ii. You relied on that shield to stop arrows, you trusted it, depended upon it
 1. It must be “picked up” and held up, got behind
 2. This is “the faith” that deflects the attacks of the enemy: trusting in Christ!
 - a. It is articular, specific faith, not merely “faith” in a general broad sense
 - b. It is the particular trust in Jesus, “the faith” handed down (Jude 1:3; Eph 1:15; 4:13; Phil 1:27), of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - b. the foundation, the REAL, the “title deed to REAL future sight and REAL inheritance” (Heb 11:1)
 - i. Faith IS the proof of the unseen things
 - ii. ticket to a ball game is only trusted if the promise is reliable (UO)
 - iii. otherwise, what makes you treat it any different than some other piece of cardboard?
2. What is faith *not*?
 - a. subjective feelings unattached from the objective truth (I just know deep in my heart)
 - i. True faith always has on objective reality upon which it relies (people’s good word, bank’s ability to protect my money, chair’s ability to hold me up)
 - b. faith is not “wishing” something opposed to evidence (miracle cures, snake oil, etc.)
 - i. This is a type of “faith” but it is not the biblical example, nor command, to believe
 - ii. Believing something strongly enough does not make it true or real, it is the other way around: it is the fact that something is true and real that makes it trustworthy in what makes it true
 - c. optimism (Peale, “believing” positive things makes them true and *actualized* in your life, the *Secret*)
 - i. faith in yourself may make you a better worker, to a degree, but this is not biblical faith
3. Faith (Biblical) always has on object and is only as strong as the object on which it relies
 - a. biblical faith involves knowledge of something reliable and trustworthy
 - i. see John’s emphasis that the Holy Spirit convicts of sin of *unbelief* primarily (John 16:8-9)
 - ii. Your faith in your shield is only as good as your shield’s *real* ability to stop arrows
 1. So, too, our faith in Christ is only as good as our Christ’s *real* ability to make us right with God (breastplate of righteousness) and to complete His promise
 2. This is why it is important to KNOW Jesus as He has revealed Himself to truly be, not as to how we may want Him to be or how the world declares Him to be
 3. Certainty is possible because Jesus is true and He has revealed Himself
 - a. 1 John 5:15-20
 - b. Rom 4:20-22
 - b. Faith *completely* relies upon its object
 - i. You hide behind that shield! Your life is on the line because you truly trust it to stop arrows
 - ii. the parachute example:
 1. head knowledge/faith – understand and believe the physics of parachutes
 2. heart knowledge/faith – understand and believe that these physics are true and reliable
 3. dependence knowledge/faith – jumping out of the plane

- iii. this is why biblical faith ALWAYS comes with transformed living (Eph 2:8-9)
 - 1. NOT: Faith + Works = Justification (Works Righteousness)
 - 2. IS: Faith = Justification + Works (James 2:14ff)
- c. Faith is intimately connected with Truth
 - i. John 8:45-46; John 19:35; Eph 1:13; 2 Thess 2:12; 1 Tim 4:3; Tit 1:1
 - ii. Relying upon that which is REAL, as opposed to that which is unreal, i.e. idolatry/self-righteousness
 - 1. Sometimes I believe that it is MY eloquence that will transform people through my preaching
 - 2. Sometimes I believe that it is MY "kindness" that will woo people to Christ
 - 3. Both of these are examples of self-dependence w/o faith
 - a. There is no dependence upon Christ to do the work through my simple proclamation of truth
 - b. I don't functionally believe that the power of the gospel truth through the work of the Holy Spirit is enough
 - iii. Faith is reliance upon the revealed Word of God: 1 John 5:9-10

Satan's Strategy is to Deceive Us to Rely On Ourselves

- 1. Self-dependence is the primary strategic attack of our adversary
 - a. Idolatry: salvation and success through self-determination and performance
 - b. Presumption: I am good enough to defeat this temptation
 - c. Arrogance: I am strong enough to resist through my principles and will
 - d. He wants us to move without faith in Christ
- 2. These attacks pierce, then keep on burning
 - a. Satan's attacks don't merely wound us, but they continue to harm us when they strike
 - i. This is why doubt is so dangerous, it continues to burn and leaves larger and more tender wounds
 - ii. Our sin, if not brought into the realm of the powerfully effective blood of Christ to forgive, make right, and heal, will continue to harm our ability to stand firm against the enemy
 - b. Depending upon Christ "snuffs out" the flames of these attacks
 - i. So, take out the darts of sin and unbelief that have pierced you by trusting in Jesus now!
 - ii. Today is the day of salvation, Christ is more than enough, trust Him and stop trusting in your own power and self-determination
 - 1. Take out the flaming dart of self-dependence, idolatry (trusting something besides Christ to give you satisfaction), presumption, and arrogance
 - 2. Repent and trust in Jesus particularly

"It is of great moment to be fully persuaded, that when we have sinned, there is a reconciliation with God ready and prepared for us: we shall otherwise always carry hell within us" (Jean Calvin)

- 3. Fear is usually the reason that we don't trust.
 - a. Fear of loss
 - i. We don't *functionally believe* that God is working for our best, so we turn to other things to find that satisfaction
 - 1. This is what Israel did in the OT over and over again, turning to pagan kings and nations to deliver them, instead of trusting the LORD and faithfully praying and waiting for Him

2. We lose hope so quickly in our day and age of immediate gratification
 - a. Example of high speed internet on airplanes (comedian on Conan O'Brien show)
 - ii. A child of God Has God as a Father
 - iii. Can't He provide all we need?
 - iv. Rom 8:32
- b. Fear of failure (Pride)
 - i. Don't take risks of dependence, because we're afraid of appearing weak or being humiliated
 1. Sermons often become attempts at works of art meant to impress
 - a. They cease to be a means to the end of exalting Christ and building faith in the hearers and become the end in themselves (faithless preaching)
 - b. This is because of a fear of being perceived as a fool
 - ii. If God is your Redeemer, whom have we to fear?
 - iii. God has not called us to a life without humiliation, actually He has called us to humility...but we are completely loved!!!
- c. Fear of despair
 - i. This work takes too long
 - ii. This person has not figured it out, yet!!
 - iii. Perseverance is a mark of large faith.
 1. Do I really believe that God is going to do what He has promised?
 2. Can I really be like God has promised I will be? Yes! He is doing it and He is faithful!
 3. Ps 27:1 - The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- d. What Have the Sons and Daughters of God have to fear?
 - i. Did Jesus "lose" on this earth?
 - ii. Was that the end of Jesus?
 - iii. God has made you complete in Christ when you put your faith in His Son. There is nothing *real* to fear about losing. So, be willing to give and willing to lose as you keep your word to others.

How Do We Defend Against Satan's Attacks and Hold Up the Shield of Faith?

1. See the love of Christ at the Cross!
 - a. Eph 3:14-19 – Paul prays that we would know the love of Christ completely and be filled up to all the fullness of God
 - b. Hope leads to great faith leads to great hope
 - c. Romans 15:13 - May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.
 - d. 1 Timothy 1:14 – grace overflowed through faith and love of Christ
 - e. His love cannot be stopped, even going down the road from the eternal glory of heaven to a stony path to a rugged cross...enduring Hell on Calvary. May our trust in Him be so perseverant.
2. Remember the God in Whose Image Your Heart is Being Formed
 - a. He is faithful
 - i. He promised salvation and secured it for us who believe
 - ii. He did it graciously, without us having to earn it
 - iii. He crowned His chosen people with every spiritual blessing in His Son
 - iv. ...and He lost in the process so that He might gain the greater glory
 - b. Depend upon Him in Prayer at all times
3. Step out and take risks depending upon Jesus!
 - a. Move out and take risks, knowing that the blood of Jesus is your righteousness, you have nothing to fear or lose that is vital to you!
 - b. When you fail in your efforts to glorify Christ, don't fear, you are under the unconditional love of the Father! Press on and stand firm in Christ-dependence!
 - c. If you start to lose hope, see the promises of Jesus again.

May we look at the Cross again and see the God of grace, who has saved us out of complete and utter desperation and called us out to be His children through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Jesus gave His life for us so that God remained faithful to His promise. When we are having trouble trusting the Lord, may we look at the cross once again and see our Redeemer who paid such a high price of faithfulness. He can be trusted completely.

Take your shield of Christ-dependence, faith, and get behind it. Lay down your self-dependence and self-trust and listen to the gentle orders of your General and trust Him. He laid down His life for you. That is what is important. Beware the flesh's quick and powerful longing to depend and protect itself and humbly kneel behind your Savior. It is here, by complete dependence for everything, that you find the strength to stand firm against the fiery darts of the enemy.